

BYRON

A LIFE IN TEN LETTERS

Lord Byron was the most celebrated of all the Romantic poets. Troubled, handsome, sexually fluid, disabled, and transgressive, he wrote his way to international fame – and scandal – before finding a kind of redemption in the Greek Revolution. He also left behind the vast trove of thrilling letters (to friends, relatives, lovers, and more) that form the core of this remarkable biography. Published to coincide with the 200th anniversary of Byron's death, and adopting a fresh approach, it explores his life and work through some of his best, most resonant correspondence. Each chapter opens with Byron's own voice – as if we have opened a letter from the poet himself – followed by a vivid account of the emotions and experiences that missive touches. This gripping life traces the meteoric trajectory of a poet whose brilliance shook the world and whose legacy continues to shape art and culture to this day.

ANDREW STAUFFER is Professor of English at the University of Virginia and the President of the Byron Society of America. He is the author of *Anger, Revolution, and Romanticism* (Cambridge University Press, 2005) and of *Book Traces: Nineteenth-Century Readers and the Future of the Library* (2021), which was the recipient of the inaugural Marilyn Gaull Book Award of the Wordsworth–Coleridge Association. He is in addition the co-editor of *Lord Byron: Selected Writings* (2023).

“This is the best short introduction to Byron available. Stauffer steers us through a tumultuous life with poise and expert authority. The letters provide vivid snapshots of Byron at key moments across three decades and the biography that emerges is deeply absorbing.”

Jane Stabler, author of *The Artistry of Exile: Romantic and Victorian Writers in Italy*

“Framed around ten of Byron’s most intriguing letters, Stauffer’s lively narrative never loses sight of the poetry, reminding the reader of Byron’s prodigious output even amidst the chaos of his domestic life. With many insightful observations on Byron’s conduct, Stauffer does not hesitate to criticize when criticism is justified, but prefers to see in Byron not so much contradiction or hypocrisy but rather a synthesis of the light and dark sides of his nature, of the serious and the comic, of the ironic and the heartfelt. A delightful read.”

Robert James Byron, 13th Baron Byron

“This new biography of Byron is a miracle of condensation; by putting the letters center-stage, Professor Stauffer manages to let his subject speak for himself in all the contradictory range of his moods and circumstances – at the same time as elegantly and unobtrusively shaping a narrative that leaps off the page.”

Roderick Beaton, author of *Byron’s War: Romantic Rebellion, Greek Revolution*

“We have had many flings at a ‘Life of Byron,’ all of them more or less successful because all of them fail to hand over a dead man to us. This little book is as good as such a venture gets because it puts front and center what Shelley might have called the ‘Life of the Life of Byron’: his very self and voice in ten remarkable letters. They sketch the story of a life whose riches taught him poverty. ‘I have spent my life both interest and principal, / And deem not, what I deem’d, my soul invincible.’ A mortal life well spent.”

Jerome McGann, author of *Byron and the Poetics of Adversity*

“Andrew Stauffer offers a fresh and intimate take on a prolific and notoriously ungovernable subject, through a handful of letters judiciously selected from over 3,000. Building on the poet’s own voice, Stauffer beautifully evokes his world from Regency high society to the sordid whirl of Venice and political turmoil in Greece. Compelling, charming, and pleasingly scandal-packed – this is Byron, brilliantly distilled.”

Emily Brand, author of *The Fall of the House of Byron*

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For Jerry McGann
*a light to lesson ages, rebel nations,
and voluptuous princes*

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The Lord Byron I find there is our Lord Byron — the fascinating — faulty — childish — philosophical being — daring the world — docile to a private circle — impetuous and indolent — gloomy and yet more gay than any other — I live with him again in these pages.

Mary Shelley